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## J. B. OUDRY.



Those painters who, like the eminent Landseer, have devoted themselves to the study and picturing of animal life, have been almost always successful men. The reason is clear. This kind of art comes home to the feelings and ideas of large bodies of the community; everybody understands a picture of a horse, an ass, dogs, deer, fox-hunts; and everybody is able to appreciate whether they are correctly or incorrectly rendered. It requires some previous education, some knowledge of



history, some travel through the world, to comprehend and enjoy historical scenes, foreign landscapes—even scenes of life which do not belong to our own sphere. But who has not studied the canine race, or watched a cat in its gambols, or noticed the prancing horse, or seen the deer skimming over the fields? And when we see a picture reflecting these familiar forms, we rarely are mistaken in our judgment of it. We comprehend that which is familiar. Certainly it is not

the highest department of human art, but it is an agreeable and pleasing species of painting, that is in every way worthy of encouragement.

The aim and object of high art is to elevate and ennoble the mind. We recognise a mission in the great painter, and we expect that mission to be fulfilled conscientiously and well; we expect him to warm our hearts, to expand the mind, and elevate the soul above the mere chaos of daily occupations. When examining a great historical or sacred picture, representing, let it be supposed, the Crucifixion, we seek not so much exact fidelity as a grand and solemn whole, that breathes of the eternal and mighty sacrifice, that chastens and softens, that carries us far away to realms of space beyond mere actuality. It is the grandeur, the sublimity, the elevation, the genius, developed in their paintings; that have carried the names of Raffaele and Michael Angelo to the uttermost ends of the earth, far more than their rich colouring or fidelity of rendering the human face and form. A daguerreotype is a better portrait than any of Vandyck; but if we could have paintings rendered the same way, we should still prefer those efforts of the hands of man which have around them the immortal halo, the poetry and life of genius.

But if what is called high art were alone encouraged, it would certainly be much to be regretted. There is another mission of painting; and that is, to please, to gratify the senses, to be agreeable. The love of pictures, whether painted or engraved, is one which should be encouraged, especially in the young. Often from the most elaborate descriptions we gain but a very faint idea of the thing itself, while in a painting or woodcut it stands evidently before us, and we comprehend. The mere description conveys often the same idea to us that it does to the blind, who, from feeling even, can gain no conception of the reality. Few men ever carried the art of faithful and elaborate description further than Fenimore Cooper, our eminent fictionist. His landscape portraits were

faithful and true; yet when we visited the places he had thus truthfully portrayed, we had some difficulty in recognising them. But when we were familiar with a place from a drawing, the description then sank deep in our minds.

The cultivation of taste is a very essential element in education, and taste can scarcely be acquired without some conception and study of art. It is well, then, that art has not always been on stilts, that sometimes it has come down and walked on level ground, and condescended to things which appear, at first sight, not its province. Very few in this world would endure subjects not adapted to their capacity and intellect. Even, however, the profoundest students find relief in the song and the tale; so the lover of painting, in its more elevated branches, cannot but occasionally welcome those painters who please, soften, and amuse him, when he is wearied of being taught and schooled.

In this and the old country many persons have been found to paint, and thousands have been found to admire, the canine race. The man who understands only one branch, and that the highest, of art, will sneer at the dog-painter; but in so doing he commits a great error. Do we not all know of what great value the dog has been to man, how useful he is in every way? and what more natural than that we should gaze with pleasure on the representation of our favourite animal? The history of the dog has yet to be written; authors have not yet done him justice, but art has.

The part of the dog in history began with the very existence of property. He was the first policeman; and it is a fact that races without dogs have always been savages. Let none of us complain, then, of their being made a prominent feature in animal-painting.

In the edition of "The Fables of La Fontaine," illustrated by Oudry, there is a magnificent portrait of this master-engraver by Tardieu, after Largillière. The very first glance we cast upon this admirable engraving charms us. We are struck by the benevolent, lively, and calm air of this man, who represents in his person the very best specimen of the French style. This face, rather fat, in which imagination and wit are mingled with a soft good humour, shows a mind without storms, a fertility without roughness, an easy facile genius without much depth. Such is the conclusion ordinarily drawn from surveying the portrait of this artist; and yet how little can we really judge from the outward semblance of the man.

The great judges of physiognomy in modern times inform us that the peaceful history of Oudry is written in his portrait, and that we may swear to the likeness without ever having seen the original. In truth, we may in vain seek, during his life of more than sixty years, for any of those agitations and those struggles which are the price so many men pay for their renown. There are few artists whose biography is recorded in history, who have not had to overcome either the terrible anguish of physical misery, or the silly prejudices of a family, or even the yielding and trembling of their own genius. Oudry did not know any of these sorrows or griefs. The son of a picture-dealer, he lived during his youth among pictures, always changing, always renewed; and masters who made the fortune of the father, began the education of the son.

However this may be, he experienced in early years a very precocious love of drawing. Oudry, the father, who was a member of the Academy of Drawing, had been a painter before he became a dealer. It is believed that he gave the first lessons to his son; but he soon placed him with Serre, painter of the galleries of the king, at Marseilles, who wished to take him away with him.

Oudry was not destined to have vast and great conceptions, or to devote himself to heroic pictures. He was a keen observer of nature, saw it with a sharp *coup-d'œil*, and drew correctly and justly. He had all the requisites for a portrait painter: we do not speak of those portraits in a lofty style, which, by grandeur of character and the nobility of the sentiments they inspire, rise to the perfection of an historical picture, like those of Velasquez, Vandyck, and Lawrence;

we speak of the familiar portrait—of that which is for the original a kind of mirror, for his friends a happy resemblance, and for amateurs a fine study. The pupil of Serre came back instinctively to Paris, with the intention of placing himself under a master of his own choice, Nicolas de Largillière. This man was a real painter, and it was in reality a piece of good fortune to be brought up in his school, especially for any one who wished to sketch a model, to learn to hang "learned draperies," to paint broadly with a light pencil, by fresh touches that please and do not weary in colour. The pupil soon rose to such a pitch of reputation that Peter the Great, who came to Paris in 1717, wished to have his portrait from the hand of Oudry; and it was so successfully executed that he wanted to take the artist and carry him off to St. Petersburg, as he had done in Holland with the carpenter of Saardam. To escape from the iron will of the great Czar, the painter, who was determined not to leave his country, was obliged to seek for a retreat where he was able to conceal himself from the search of his well-meaning friends.

Largillière, who was something better than a mere portrait painter, took great pleasure in teaching his pupil the principles he had himself drawn from nature, and the study of the painters of the Flemish school. He had also taught him the principles of perspective and *chiaroscuro*, and had laid a very strong foundation relative to mixing and using colours. Oudry never ceased to remember these things, and it was always pleasant in after life to hear him talking of what he had learnt from his long and learned conversations with Largillière. There is much in the way in which a thing is taught, and the young artist will often learn more from the pleasant and agreeable gossip of an able master, than from his most learned disquisitions in one of his most learned moods.

One day the master told his pupil that he must learn to paint flowers, and as Oudry went to fetch some bouquets of flowers of varied hue and colour, Largillière sent the pupil back to the garden to pick out a bunch of flowers all white. He then himself placed them on a clear background, which, on the side of the shadow, threw them up in bold relief, and on the side of the light gave them delicate demi-tints. The master having then compared the white of the pallet with the light side of the flowers, which was less dazzling, showed that in this tuft of white flowers, the lights which were to be touched with pure white were in very little quantity, in comparison with the demi-tints; this is exactly what gave roundness and vigour to the bouquet, and the learned painter thence drew the conclusion, that to give relief to the model, to round it, as it were, large demi-tints were needed, much economy in lights, and some very strong dark touches, in the centre of the shadow and in the places which are not brought up by the refraction.

The worthy Largillière thus communicated little by little the secrets of art to his pupil. Colouring was, above all, the object of his interviews and studies; and it was by bold examples that he taught now how to find local tints, now how to modify them, according to the relative value which the surrounding colour assigned to them. "Look at that silver vase," said he one day: "it is certainly true that its whole mass is white; but how will you determine the true tone which is proper to it? It is by comparing it, not to contraries, but to things like itself; because what is wanted is a shade. If you bring near this vase of silver either linen, or paper, or satin, or porcelain, you will readily perceive that the white of the vase is not at all like the white of the porcelain, nor of the satin, nor of the paper, nor of the linen; and by carefully examining the tone which it has not got, you will end by finding the tone which it has." On another occasion, speaking of those exaggerated repellants which are authorised by no rule, especially when the scene is laid in an open country—where shaded masses are only produced by the movement of clouds—he ridiculed good-humouredly that ultra-black tone in which drapery, in which lights, flesh, terraces, are lost; while the figures of the second foreground, suddenly lit up, resemble a troop of Europeans beside a company of Moors.

After five years of arduous study in the *atelier* of Largillière,

Oudry was remarked for his portraits and some few historical pictures. He was as yet unaware of his own particular talent, and moved in the dark towards his branch of art and his peculiar fame. His first productions caused him to be elected a member and a professor of the Academy of St. Luke. But his effort to follow in the track of the great artists of history was not destined to last very long. One day he sketched off with much success a hunter and his dog, and Largillière said to him laughing, "Get along, Oudry; you will never be anything but a dog-painter." Oudry thought that in these words he saw his horoscope. He began at once to devote his whole energies to the study and portraiture of animals, and he did so with surprising good fortune. He had hit upon that particular branch of art which was suited to his genius, and thence his immediate success.

But he did not at once renounce the attempt to shine in historical paintings, and he was received into the Academy in 1717, upon the faith of a picture of "The Adoration of the Magi," painted for the chapter of St. Martin-in-the-Fields. His special painting for his reception was an allegorical design of Plenty.

It would be difficult to find these works of Oudry, and it is allowable to suppose that they were not productions of a very high order, since the reputation which their author has gained in another style has completely eclipsed them. It is as an animal painter that Oudry is a master of his art. He had a name already when he was named professor and pensioner of the king, with a lodging in the Tuileries. The talent of Oudry could not but please Louis XV., who considered hunting one of the first duties of government—one of the noblest occupations of man. It was this king's mad yielding to his impulses, that paved the way for so much that was terrible in the subsequent revolution. He took such delight in the works of this artist, that he passed whole hours in his workshop. It is said that he was wont to take the utmost pleasure in watching him paint several hunting pictures, which were afterwards to be executed in Gobelins tapestries, and which the king destined for his bed-chamber in the palace of Compiègne, and the council-chamber. The frivolous and capricious king wished the idea of pleasure to follow him to the very chamber where he was forced to undergo the *ennui* of governing. A very lively and amusing description of these pictures is to be found in the "Mercure de France" of 1738. The king is there represented accompanied by his courtiers, his officers, and his huntsmen—now pulling on his boots to mount on horseback—now present at a *hallali* near the ponds of St. Jean-aux-Bois—now running down the deer in view of Royal-Lieu. This last composition is very animated. In front the pack is seen bounding forward through fields filled by blue-bells and poppies; further off, a troop of huntsmen pass the river Oise in a ferry-boat. The boat of Beaumont, filled with passengers, ascends the river; while other boats seem to be brought in to vary the monotony of the water-lines. The king's carriage, drawn by four horses, and a view of Compiègne, complete the features of this composition.

The king, Louis XV., was so delighted with the personal figure he was made to assume in these pictures, and consequently so delighted with the artist, that he invited him down to the great hunts of Fontainebleau. On this occasion, the rapid conception of nature, caught in her happy moods, lent even a more striking character of truth to his animals, caught as it were in the fact; and seeing them reproduced so faithfully from nature, the king was delighted to be able to recognise them one after another, and to call them by their names.

From the court of France the renown of Oudry spread over all Europe. He began to find foreigners disputing for the honour and pleasure of possessing his pictures. The king of Denmark wrote to him to ask him to come to Copenhagen; the prince of Mecklenburg caused a gallery to be expressly constructed to receive the pictures of Oudry.

And it was not only by hunting scenes and pictures of animals that this painter made himself a name. In his days landscape-painting—that charming and pleasing branch of

art—was very popular, and many amateurs ordered pictures of him. Lafont de Saint-Yenne speaks highly of them in his little work on the Exhibition of 1746, and he adds to the opinion of the public the expression of his own personal feelings. "There is nothing more happy," said he, "than the choice of sites in the paintings of Oudry. Nature shows herself adorned in her native and rarest beauties a thousand times more enchanting than that of the palace of kings. One sees and almost feels a genuine freshness under the deep verdure of his groups of trees, whose leaves are admirable, and of which he knows how to vary the forms, the touthes, and the tones with an infinite art. This freshness is seen by the light of his water so well distributed, some tranquil, some in movement; his able pencil makes beauty out of everything; here a ruined bridge, there a mill, further on, huts and old houses, add to these familiar scenes an enchanting air."

If so many successes contribute to the glory and the future of the painter, we have reason to regret, and the French still more, when they think of the numerous and valuable pictures which have been removed from France to foreign countries. This man, whose fertility is confessed in all biographies, has only seven or eight pictures, of moderate size, in the Louvre. The largest represents a "Wolf Hunt." The beast, attacked on all sides, and still menaced by a fourth enemy which forms the rear-guard, turns round his head with an air of fear and powerless rage. The head of the wolf is a remarkably fine piece. The movements of the dogs are admirable for truth and reality. They are painted moreover with rare perfection, and by brilliant touches which show off with extreme vigour even the variety of their skins. It is to be regretted that he has not thrown a little more fire into this terribly bloody struggle. The landscape is, however, one of agreeable country beauty, and, retreating as it does, it adds to the beauty of the picture. A forest warmed by some rays of the sun, and which dies away in the summer vapour, recalls some of the aims, less *naïve* it is true, of the greatest contemporary landscape painters. Its brown mass serves as a background to the skin of the animals, which are, precisely those dogs of the Pyrenees with rough skin which Oudry had studied in the kennel of the king.

Oudry often reproduced these terrific combats of wolves surprised by dogs. Diderot tells us that in the Exhibition of 1753, he hung up a picture representing bull-dogs combatting three wolves and a jackal. "This picture," adds the celebrated writer, "has been described as too uniform; the landscapes sad and hard."

Though it is perhaps a truthful observation to make, that the pictures of Oudry are a little too cold, and that his skies want the charm and the dazzling brightness of those of Desportes, it is quite easy to see, from some of his paintings, that he could easily escape from those faults. He painted in one picture, in most admirable colours, two hounds; one is fawn-coloured, the other black. The one is brought out in bold relief upon a brown background of trunks of trees and dark green plants, while the black is brought up by the clear and pellucid light of a luminous sky. These frank and beautiful contrasts always please the eye, and this pretty picture is a worthy parallel of another canvas which represents the delicate she-hounds, white and spotted with yellow, with long narrow snouts, with speaking and intelligent eyes—delicate personages, whose names have been preserved by Oudry at the bottom of his picture—*Sylva* and *Mignonne*.

Oudry was above all an indefatigable and laborious workman. He belongs to that family of conscientious artists who were born in the first half of the eighteenth century, and whose whole life, whose existence, whose very moral and physical being, was devoted to the cultivation, the worship of art. Not satisfied with painting enough to be able to produce and show in a single Exhibition more than fifteen pictures at a time, as often happened to him, particularly in 1753, Oudry took a journey into the country almost every day, to draw nature on the spot, and spent nearly all his evenings in producing those numerous drawings of which we shall presently have occasion to speak,

The pupil of Largillière, a passionate admirer of nature, was one of the firsts to contend against the conventional, hard, and unreal types which spoilt the French school. He liked to copy nature itself, and when he sought the real, he found it. He studied the manners, customs, habits, and peculiarities of animals in their own retreats. He frequently went down to Dieppe to be present at the exact moment when the fish were fresh from the sea. He patiently drew the inhabitants of the Jardin des Plantes; and as fast as the royal and really splendid collection was enriched by a rare bird, his portfolios were enriched by a new drawing. And so many earnest studies, from which he profited so well, were not lost to the world.

Oudry, by his pleasant manners, his wit, and his connexion with the court, was one of the influential men of the Academy; his voice was always listened to, the more because he threw

accomplished literary production. It is something extremely rare from a Frenchman, an admirable example of modesty and pious veneration.

The following is the discourse alluded to: it would be spoilt by abridgment:—

"I believe I am sufficiently well known amongst you, gentlemen, not to need the assurance, that if I undertake to give the explanation of certain principles, it is not at all with a view to attack the sentiments of any of my *confrères* who may see things in another light from what I do, and that much less do I suppose myself capable of teaching them. You know that I have always respected the lights and the talents of our best masters. I may then say frankly, that when I wrote these simple reflections, I never thought of bringing them publicly before you; I thought only of arranging them in my own mind, and of putting them together for



THE FOX STARTLED WHILE DEVOURING HIS PREY.—FROM A PAINTING BY OUDRY.

so much grace into all that he said. In the sitting of the 7th of June, 1749, he read to the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, of which Coppel was then the director, a paper, which was entitled, "Reflections on the Mode of Studying Colour, by comparing objects one with the other." Oudry, giving to Largillière the honour of these reflections, explains with charming and native simplicity all that his master had taught him in relation to colour, the connexion of tones, the infinite variety they derive from the subduing of the lights, and also his ideas upon drawing and *chiaroscuro*. In a literary point of view, this piece belongs rather to the seventeenth than to the eighteenth century, and we are inclined to believe, from the testimony of this production, in the absence of all other private details relative to the life of Oudry, that this painter no-wise resembled his contemporaries in manners or conduct. He was not of the age in which he lived. His disquisition, moreover, is something far better than an

the instruction of my son; but since it has been so clearly proved that every one of us should contribute, according to his means, to the instruction of our young pupils, who are brought to this meeting for that purpose, I thought it my duty to yield to this consideration.

"You know very well, gentlemen, what kind of man M. de Largillière was, and the admirable maxims he had laid down, in connexion with the great effects and, as it were, the magic of our art. He always communicated them to me with the true love of a father; and it is, I assure you, with extreme delight, with the greatest pleasure an honest man can feel, truly loving his art and sympathising warmly with those youths who seek distinction in earnest, that I communicate them in my turn. M. de Largillière has told me many times that it was at the Flemish school where he was educated that he collected together all those fine maxims which he knew so well how to put into practice; and he often men-



tioned to me the great regret he felt at seeing and feeling, on so many hands, the want of attention to things which were of such essential importance to the artist. Perhaps he was a little too partial to his nurse, that nurse he always loved so well; but even if we look upon some of his opinions as prejudices, I hope that you will not consider them unworthy of your attention, and that even these errors, if you regard them as such, may appear to you as the errors of a great artist.

"Where he was so truly great, as you all know, and have repeatedly allowed, is in colour, in *chiaroscuro*, in effect, and in harmony. The ideas he had on these subjects were beautiful and clear, when he explained them, as he did, with so much sweetness, gentleness, and placidity.

"I shall, I warn you, often mix up my own ideas with those of my master; I could with difficulty separate them; they have been united too long; they have become incorporated in one, and to divide them now is an impossible task.

nothing else but what is natural to each object, and that the *chiaroscuro* is the art of distributing the lights and shadows with that intelligence which causes a picture to produce effect. But it is not sufficient to have a general idea of this. The great point is, to know how to apply the local colour properly and efficiently, and to acquire that knowledge which gives its value by contrasting it with another.

"This is in my opinion the infinite in art, and a point on which we have much fewer principles than any other. I mean principles founded on the true and the natural; for in principles founded on the works of the old masters we certainly are not deficient. We have, indeed, writers enough and to spare who have spoken thereupon. But it is a serious question whether what they have said on the point is very solid; or, if it be solid, do we do all in our power to profit by the good fruit we ought to derive from these principles? This is my first difficulty.



THE STAG HUNT.—FROM A PAINTING BY OUDRY.

Moreover, forty years of assiduous labour certainly have given me some new ideas, relative to which I do not wish to show myself miserly, any more than I wish to keep back those of others. Loving my branch of art as I do, I cannot but wish that what I know, others too may have the pleasure of knowing. I know nothing more mean, in an elevated art like ours, than to have little secrets, and not to do for those who are to succeed us that which has been done for us. As I have already said, I intend to speak, on the present occasion, only to the youth present; and to remove every suspicion, I hope you will allow me to speak out to that youth.

"Colour is one of the most important branches of our art. It is that which characterises it, which distinguishes it so clearly from sculpture. It is in the colouring that consists the charm and the brilliance of our works. You are sufficiently advanced to be perfectly aware of this. You are also aware, that in colouring there are two distinct branches:—the local colour, and the *chiaroscuro*; that the local colour is

"What do you do? Full of that just and lofty admiration with which you have been inspired for the masters whom we look upon as colourists, you begin to copy them. But how do you copy them? Plainly and simply, and almost without any reflection, putting white where you see white, red where you see red, and so on. So that, instead of forming a just idea of the colouring of the master, you simply get hold of a sample. How must we act in order to do better? We must, when we copy a fine picture, ask our master the reason why the author of this picture coloured such and such a part in such and such a way. In this way you will learn, on the principle of induction, that which you seek by routine, and which it cannot give you. Whenever you copy a new author, you must obtain from your master that instruction, based on new reasoning and new principles, which will sink into your mind, and which will guarantee you against an acquired prejudice, which sometimes lasts a whole life, in favour of one artist and against all others, often the cause of the complete ruin

and destruction of a young man who promised better things.

"By avoiding this danger, mark what will happen. While copying, we will say, a Titian, you will be enchanted beyond all doubt with the beautiful tones you will find in it, and the beautiful play of these tones upon the general effect. But your master will say, 'Take care; do not fancy that all these tones would have the same value, if they were placed elsewhere. It belongs to this composition for such and such a reason. This is the true merit of this author. If this colour were in the least out of place, it would be false and shocking.' The force of this reasoning would surely strike you, and it must even strike you now. Do you not see very clearly that painting would be a very narrow art, if we only required an assortment of tints after Titian, to colour as well as he does?"

"I should myself highly approve and recommend, in order that you might make these studies truly valuable, that you should mix up with them the study of nature. Yes, I should wish as soon as a young man begins to paint, having a good foundation of drawing, and knowing a little of colouring, that when he has copied a Titian, he should take nature, and from it paint a similar picture. This would send him to seek in nature those principles which the great master had followed so beautifully. Do you not perceive that if he could but seize the connecting link, he would be on the high road to discover the truth in art for himself? When I mention a Titian, I mean also a Paul Veronese, a Giorgione, a Rubens, a Rembrandt, a Vandyck—any master, in a word, who is celebrated as a colourist:

"You can scarcely form a conception of the rapidity with which you would advance on this road, and what prodigious advantage you would have over others, even of equal talent, by painting after nature in this spirit—that is to say, with a view to colour. Try the experiment, and I am sure you will be obliged to me for the advice.

"The first intention you should have, when you draw from nature in this point of view, is to place yourself in a position to judge of the value and influence that it must have upon the background which you mean to give to your picture. This is a very important branch, and I shall prove it, I hope, to your satisfaction.

"Every object is cast up in relief against its background; and when you paint on a background without light—that is, of a dark brown—it holds the 'mass' or object painted within itself. If the background be clear, the mass is coloured, not to say brown.

"When then you paint after nature, and gaze at the object of your study, brought up by a background without light, and introduce it in your picture on the contrary, on a light background, the consequence will be that the two will not harmonise, and the effect of your picture will be spoiled.

"The true method by which you may avoid these evils is so simple that it is surprising it should have been neglected. It consists in guiding yourself strictly on the background which you wish to represent in your picture, and in placing your copy from nature on a similar background to that you had painted from. How is this to be done? By placing behind the object you are about to transfer to your canvas a linen or canvas of the colour of your proposed background. I would even require, that you might be the more correct, that you should lay on this canvas a coat of colours identical with your background. If you have a prominent figure to oppose to a light sky, your canvas should have that tint; if the background is architecture, through orifices in which the light pours, the canvas should be stone-coloured; if on a landscape, or a ruin, let it be of a similar colour. Be careful when you are drawing a light sky in the background to turn the canvas to the light, as when you are painting dark shadows you must do the contrary. The good masters of the Flemish school have never failed to take these precautions, and they have derived from this mode of proceeding the great advantage of seeing the force of colours in opposition, of appreciating their value, which can only be done by contrast; the more because no words, no prescription, no directions can indicate

to you any tint of any kind whatever. It is only the study of nature which leads from one to the other—always by comparison, and never otherwise."

It will be seen from this production that the artist, so perfect as a painter and a disciple, is everywhere overcome by his filial piety, and seeks to be forgotten himself while glorifying his master. The great principle which Oudry has endeavoured to inculcate in his treatise is, that a picture should be always strictly in keeping with the background, and that before we compose or paint groups of figures and colour them, we must know on what background we are about to place them; then study them from nature, by placing behind the model a canvas of the same tone as that in which we intend to paint the background. It is quite true, in painting, that the background is a matter of importance too often neglected by artists in their anxiety to finish the principal figures. The background is, in a painting, what the key-note is in singing. A painter who forgets this principle is exactly in the same position as a musician, who having written a piece in a major key, afterwards plays it in a minor.

M. de Largillière always complained of a practice very common in France, of always placing the model—whatever size the picture—at the same distance from the eye. The figures once transposed to the canvas, the master coloured them by guess-work, according to the tone which he intended to give to the picture. This gave rise to numerous mistakes, to defective perspective, and many other very serious errors. If figures in the distant background were too lively in colour, or too faint, they were toned down by a *glacis* of very light blue, or they were heightened by some touches of darker colours. But these tints, supplied by the imagination, were far inferior to those fading, gentle, broken lines, lost as it were in the air, to use a quaint expression—to those faint, indistinct colours which cannot be described. As for the touch, it could not, acquired by guess, impart that vagueness and mistiness which is found in the reality.

To this elegant speech, substantial and yet highly coloured, M. Coppel returned a brief answer full of exquisite politeness, which was taken down upon the register of the deliberations.

Some little time after, there was remarked in an exhibition a tableau, which was the strict application of the principles of Largillière, and as if given as an example to illustrate lessons so eloquently presented. Diderot speaks of it in these terms: "A picture that M. Oudry painted subsequently to his paper-read at the Academy, represents upon a white background five or six white objects, all of a different tint; such as a white duck, a damask napkin, a porcelain bowl full of whipped cream, a wax candle in a silver candlestick, and above some paper. This picture is of great, of inestimable value in the eyes of *connoisseurs*."

The passion, for it could be called by no other name, which Jean Baptiste Oudry conceived for animals, taught him most naturally to love La Fontaine, and inspired him with a desire to illustrate those admirable apologues of this best of little story-tellers. In his studious leisure, he composed more than a hundred and fifty drawings, which were engraved under the direction of Cochin, and are the ornaments of the celebrated edition published in 1755 by Monsieur de Montevault. The imagination of Oudry, the profound knowledge which he had acquired of the structure and the physiognomy of animals, is seen in this doubly precious work. We can here, indeed, appreciate his varied backgrounds, adorned by sweet landscapes; and we gaze with pleasure, in the admirable foreground, on large plants, while we unceasingly admire the attitude of the animals whose physiognomies actually seem to convey on many occasions the profound or the witty allusions of the fabulist. Before Carle Vernet, before Grandville, by whom, however, he was in after times surpassed, Oudry discovered the secret of giving to his animals the expression of human passions, and it is not without reason that the editor of his drawings calls him in the preface the La Fontaine of painting.

All the engravings are not, however, equally fine. Some, where the subject of the fable obliges the author to produce

the human figure, are far from being equal to those in which animals alone fill up the scene. We may even very readily be led to believe that some of these drawings are not from the pencil of Oudry. We give in this part the words of the preface, in which the editor of the fables confesses that the drawings of Oudry have been touched up by Cochin. "M. Cochin, of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture, undertook to engrave those drawings, or to have them engraved under his eyes. To succeed in this he was obliged to make new ones from the originals of M. Oudry, in which was distinctly seen that precision of outline to which painters never will bend in their compositions, and which is yet so necessary for the perfect success of the engraving." Strange confidence. Nevertheless, it is not doubtful that the expressions we have quoted are of rather a general character, and from the way in which most of the subjects are treated, it is quite clear that those who thought to correct Oudry only succeeded in reproducing him imperfectly.

He did not wholly confine himself to drawing subjects furnished him by the fables of La Fontaine. He painted six of these fables for the apartments of the Dauphin and Dauphiness. The Louvre possesses more than one of them, and they are really and truly little master-pieces—amongst others, that of "The Two She-goats:—"

"Deux chèvres donc s'emancipant,  
Toutes deux ayant patte blanche,  
Quitterent les bas près, chacune de sa part:  
L'une vers l'autre allait pour quelque bon hasard.  
Un ruisseau se rencontre, et pour pont une planche."

The moment when our two adventurers meet nose to nose on the bridge, is precisely that selected by the tasteful artist. The scrupulous fidelity with which the painter has served the fabulist, and the *naïveté* of the tableau, give it its charm. The fierce Amazons meet like two knights in a tournament; and the charm, the piquancy of their attitudes, is derived from its simple truth. The landscape represents some willows, painted broadly and with great vigour; while the faint light of the sky after the sunset is beautifully rendered. The foreground is all demi-tint. We feel that at this mysterious hour the country is deserted and abandoned: the memorable combat will have no other witness save the waves of the stream, into which are about to fall the descendants of the she-goat Amalthea, which had the immortal honour of nourishing Jupiter.

Diderot speaks of another composition which we have engraved (p. 405): "A picture which pleased everybody, and which may truly be called the best picture in the whole exhibition, because it is really and truly faultless, is 'A Dog with Puppies.' It is impossible by any effort of the pen to give any idea of the truth and vigour of expression which is here displayed by the artist. The semi-stupid languor and the menacing fear of the beast are the work of the real and undoubted genius of the painter. A ray of the sun, which falls on the head of the mother through a loophole, is something really marvellous. This ray of light seems really to stand up out of the picture. This canvas, which is four feet wide by three high, of an oval form, has been recently purchased by the Baron de Holbach, who gave a hundred pistoles for it."

D'Argenville, in his interesting and lucid biography of this artist, has said: "The pictures of Oudry are rather the work of mind and imagination, than of sentiment and the heart. There are in Oudry none of those dashing and exciting effects, which genius grasps, divines, snatches at, when warmed by the heated imagination. His inventions are calm, real, well-ordained; his drawing correct, his lights ably disposed, his pencil clever and easy; and, nevertheless, in all his works there is wanting that sort of surprise, that spirit, that frank open style, which add so much to the charms of talent and genius."

Jean Baptiste Oudry was a worthy and excellent man. It appears that he never inspired any one with hatred, and that through his life he enjoyed the delight and satisfaction of

being surrounded by many and warm friends. He loved music almost as much as he did painting. "To love music," says a French critic, "is almost to possess a virtue." When Largillière painted his portrait, he took care to remind us of this circumstance, by surrounding the medallion with appropriate ornaments. On one side is a palette, on the other a violin. The probity of the "beloved painter" of Louis XV. was beyond suspicion; and he was always above the corruptions of the court and the venality of his day. He was, in fact, an honest man in every sense of the word. The generality of French critics, from this very circumstance, doubt his claims to be considered a great painter.

If the talent of Oudry sinned somewhat on the side of liberty and fancy, on the other hand what correctness he shows in imitation, what truth in the physiognomies, what charming *naïveté* in the position of his personages, that is, of his favourite, his "beloved characters"—animals. In his hunting scenes that he loved so much to paint, it is not so much the wild chase, the helter-skelter scamper through woods, over hedges, stiles, and ditches that we see; it is not so much the excitement and emotion of the combat, when the wild boar turns round against the panting dogs, when the deer falls wearied under the teeth of ever renewed enemies; it is rather the peculiar physiognomy of each animal, the special character of each race, the distinctive features of each individual. One day Largillière was so pleased with two of his hunting scenes, a wild boar and a bear hunt, copied by Oudry from a Dutchman, that he opened his purse to buy them; Oudry refused the money, and made him a present of them.

We have already alluded to his having painted the portrait of every animal in the Jardin des Plantes; he further drew a series of hunting hounds, into which he introduced every distinct race. It would be endless to attempt to enumerate all the drawings with which Oudry has enriched French art. He himself has engraved several on steel. Of these, the most celebrated are five hunting pieces, drawn and engraved by himself, and amongst which the most remarkable are:—"A Wolf at Bay," "A Deer hanging to a tree, with several Birds," and "A Fox caught by Four Dogs."

"The Fox startled while devouring his prey" (p. 408) is very cleverly executed. The background is clear and definite, the animal is represented with scrupulous fidelity, the attitude is admirable, his ears intimate clearly that the deep baying of the hound has been heard; his teeth, his mouth, combine to form an expression of fierce rage which is peculiarly effective; the tail lying over the paw is exceedingly natural, while the unfortunate victim lies in an attitude so real, so exactly as we should expect to see it, that too much praise can scarcely be given to this production.

"The Roebuck run down" (p. 412) is also a very fine piece. The dogs, the hunted beast, the tree, the accessories of every kind, are effective and natural. This is a celebrated picture, of which the colouring is peculiarly successful.

"The Rat and the Elephant" (p. 413) is a representation of one of those fanciful allegories to which we have already alluded. It is exceedingly correct in its details, and holds a deservedly high place in the minds of amateurs, from the power of its lights and shadows. The car is imaginative certainly, but what is wanting in truth is gained in picturesqueness.

"The Wolf at Bay" (p. 417) is held in high estimation. It is exceedingly effective in the engraving, and still more so as a painting. It is a subject which Oudry thoroughly comprehended. The wolf is correctly painted, and the dogs admirable in truth, vigour, and expression. A previous allusion has, however, been made to this work.

"The Heron" (p. 416) is a specimen of those still-nature productions which have carried Oudry's reputation into the private galleries of so many of the country gentlemen of the world. The trees, the old trunk, the game, the dog, are painted with expression and rare fidelity.

The most picturesque of all those represented in our pages is that of "Bertrand and Raton" (p. 420). It is difficult to



say which is most successful, the monkey or the cat. They are startling from the life-like vigour with which they are painted. This is an illustration of a favourite fable of La Fontaine's.

Whatever may have been the talent of Oudry for drawing and painting animals, it must be allowed that he was not equally well acquainted with every species, and is not always successful in seizing the true character and manner. If he was perfect in dogs, foxes, wolves, even monkeys; and in general in animals which figure as principal characters in hunting scenes, and which he was so fond of dedicating to

more perfect in the art of grouping in trophies, pikes, eels, tench, carp, and shell-fish; or in combining on one canvas, to please the eye, some snipe hanging by a claw, partridges, and quails, ducks of changing colour, with their beautiful emerald spots. How common it is to see artists of the present day imitating these signs over doors, by Oudry, where in chance medley we find violins, guitars, flutes, tamborines, and a hundred other different attributes of the arts. These happy and successfully "arranged disorders," to use an hyperbolic French phrase, invented with so much care, executed with so much talent, have since become mere



THE ROEBUCK RUN DOWN.—FROM A PAINTING BY OUDRY.

"Messire Louis Bontemps, *capitaine des chasses de la vénerie du Louvre*," he was far less fortunate when he attempted to portray lions, panthers, and leopards. It seems as if it was reserved for the modern artist to comprehend, elucidate, and create the savage and poetic side of creation. Oudry humanised his tigers, softened down and civilised his panthers, and made his lions quite tame and gentlemanly beings; but he was at home and true when he had to reproduce the bounding deer or the delicate doe, and he knew so admirably how to co-ordinate and arrange the wooded scene, so full of delicate perfume and country balminess. He was also exceedingly successful in the representation of still nature. No one was

fillings up—agreeable enough, but so evidently copies as to lose all zest and power.

Oudry used his talents also sometimes in providing models, sometimes in executing table ornaments. France has always been a peculiar country, and one of its greatest peculiarities has been minute attention to the philosophy of the table. In early days, before art had discovered the means of decorating tables, it employed those offered by nature. Flowers, which grow so abundantly and richly on the surface of the earth, were naturally enough the principal objects selected; they were eagerly chosen by man to adorn his table. The walls of houses in early days in France were much in want of

ornament. A rare book, that of Fortunat, tells us that the walls, instead of showing the naked stone, were adorned with ivy. The floor of the festive hall was carpeted with flowers; silver lilies and purple poppies covered the ground. The table was loaded with roses, which took the place of a table-cloth. Flowers, too, were used to adorn chapels. The poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries often allude to this custom; while guests wore chaplets of flowers, which also hung from the bottles.

In the fourteenth century artistic contrivances were added,

Objects adorned with scenes of the chase were those chiefly selected by Oudry when he designed these ephemeral sketches, sketches which had for their sole object the amusement and gratification of a prince whom he wished to please, because he patronised him largely. Stags, dogs, wolves, as in his pictures, were the subjects selected; and though only designed for the pleasure of the hour, they were, it is said, sometimes singularly beautiful. Of course, they are not in any way preserved, and the memory only of these trifles now remains.

Oudry has condescended even to make charades and



THE RAT AND THE ELEPHANT.—FROM A PAINTING BY OUDRY.

and we hear of white cloths, on which flowers were tacked by way of ornament. Louis XIV. in his banquets had his tables also thus adorned. In 1680, at the marriage of Mademoiselle of Blois with the Prince of Conti, no other decoration appeared. Later, a kind of cake was invented of clay, by Polish artists, who stuck flowers all over it; and later still, various ornaments of the highest taste, more artificial, but more permanent, were introduced. Oudry conceived many of these for such men as Louis XV. and the Regent of Orleans, who, whatever their depravity, always encouraged a spirit of beauty in all that surrounded them.

rebuses; but they want that startling effect, that amusing absurdity, that salt which now is generally found in these productions. The talent of Oudry was so *naïve* and so decent, that he was never able successfully to illustrate the "Comic Romance" of Scarron. To enter with spirit into the very reality of this grotesque conception required a liveliness, a gaiety, a humour, which Oudry did not possess. In the seventeenth century, amidst the magnificence and splendours of the reign of Louis XIV., the poem of Scarron was one hundred years after date, and quite out of place. It may be readily imagined, that when reading the "Comic Romance,"

Louis XIV. must have been quite as much offended as at the "magots" of Teniers the younger; and he must have been profoundly humiliated to have married the widow of such a poet, to have succeeded—after having loved Athenais de Mortemart—the historian of the Cavern and of Ragotin. Oudry, who, by the dignity and decency of his manner, was a man of the seventeenth century, could not understand the spirit of a novel which reminded the reader of the jokes of Don Quixote and the indecencies of Brantome. He was, therefore, rather cold and heavy when he tried to paint the scenes of this celebrated book. It needed the pen, the wit, the ease of Pater, to paint that wandering caravan of comedians, making a triumphal entry into Mans upon a car drawn by oxen, and carrying all the baggage and materials of the dramatic company: ladder, cages, decorations, old carpets; this one with a guitar on his back, the other with a plaster on his eye; the mob, and particularly the women, scattering their jokes mercilessly after them.\* A certain dose of buffoonery was required to paint the burlesque adventures of Ragotin—the rows, the riots, the adventures in the gaming-house, the showers of fisticuffs, at which are present the washerwoman and Angelica, while on the ground roll the hats of the vanquished. At all events, Oudry showed his great power over light and shade, which plays so marked a part in his compositions, whether it lights up in a picturesque way the scene on the stairs, or the chastising of the servants, or sheds its beams upon the very spot where fall the blows. But it wanted Hogarth to do justice to the subjects which were not either very decent or very refined.

Oudry, always laborious and always inexhaustible, was suddenly checked in his studies by an attack of apoplexy, which struck him in 1755. Afflicted by painful presentiments, he used to say, "If I do not work, I shall die." He had become director and manager of the factory of Beauvais, after being over the Gobelins. He wished to start for Beauvais, in the hope of recruiting his health by the balmy breath of the country air. He died on his arrival, on the 30th of April, 1755, at the age of sixty-nine.

He was widely regretted, for he was a very able artist, a clever master, a sincere friend, a good man; and this is much indeed to say in a time like that in which he lived—the age of good old-gentlemanly vices, when Louis XIV. was king; of orgies and monstrous depravity, when Louis XV. was monarch.

Oudry introduced into some of his scenes, morning breaking and craggy hills and forests with considerable effect; and once, in a scene supposed to be in Switzerland, he is exceedingly successful. The subject was good, but difficult, and the picture is now in one of the private galleries of Paris. M. Bouchard, a very well-known amateur, says that it is exceedingly fine. The following will give some idea of the difficulty of the subject. "All the world over," says one who has described in a few dashes the best of Swiss scenery, "the dawn of morning is beautiful, when the earth looks like a bride arrayed in orient pearls, and the sun spreads far and wide his canopy of crimson clouds, which his glory converts gradually into gold. But amid the Valais Alps, the loveliness of morning sets language at defiance. Imagine endless wreaths of snow, crowning piny mountains, and enveloped with a rosy flush by the magic of the young light. This glowing investiture, like the breast of the dove, every moment displays new colours, glancing off in fugitive coruscations which dazzle and intoxicate the senses. A luminous border hangs upon cliff and crag, and a whisper, soft as the breath of love, showers down upon you from the pine forests as you move. A feeling, half religion, half sense, fills your breast, and your eyes become humid with gratitude as you look upwards and around you. The reading of your childhood comes over you—you remember the earliest page in the history of man—'And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good'—and good, you murmur to yourself, it is. If there be poetry in the soul, it comes out at such

moments; and by the process which I faintly and imperfectly describe, travelling sometimes mellows the character and improves our relish of life."

Jean Baptiste Oudry engraved seventy-five pieces with his own hand.

Of these we have engraved "The Roebuck run down," and "The Wolf at Bay." The "Roebuck run down" is a very able and effective engraving in the original.

Out of thirty-eight pieces which Oudry sketched for the comic romance of Scarron, twenty-one are engraved by himself. He also sketched several designs for Don Quixote.

His best, however, are those illustrating "La Fontaine."

For the chapter of St. Martin-des-Champs, he painted "The Adoration of the Magi;" for the apartments of the king at Choisy, a monstrous wolf held by four dogs, a jackal attacked by two bull-dogs, some specimens of still nature, boars, deers, herons, pheasants, horses, hung up; for the apartments of the dauphiness at Versailles, subjects taken from the fables of La Fontaine—"The Two She-Goats," "The Fox and the Stork."

The pictures of Oudry are principally found in Paris and the departments.

In the Louvre there is "A Wolf Hunt," "A Boar Hunt," "A Dog guarding some Game."

The Museums of Dijon, Toulouse, Montpellier, Nantes, Caen, and Rouen, have some excellent specimens of this master.

In 1770, at the sale of the Cabinet of M. de la Live de Jully, two pictures of Oudry, representing "Seven Ducks lying," and "A Dog barking at a Fox," were sold for £20. "Two Hounds lying near a Hare and a Partridge," £15.

At the Prince de Conti's, there were six paintings by Oudry.

At the sale of the collection of that amateur, in 1777, two specimens of still nature, painted at Dieppe in 1724, representing "Parrots and Fish," rose to the high price of £36.

## THE TOMB OF JULIUS II.

MANY persons have heard of the sufferings of artists and authors, of the struggles and difficulties which almost every man of genius has had to endure, especially in the beginning of his career. Often, too, this has lasted far beyond the time when men have acquired celebrity and fame. It is too true, that those who delight us by their pens and by their pencils are often thoughtless, to use no stronger term; though it would be unfair and unjust to accuse all of the errors of some, and to fancy that every man who suffers does so from improvidence and want of ordinary foresight. In many instances, among the men of the greatest genius, difficulties have arisen from a very different source. Jealousies, suspicions, and heartburnings, have been indulged by rivals, who have contrived, by petty and weak annoyances, to make the existence of some of the best of men a misery.

Michael Angelo, that great painter, whose name is familiar to the merest tyro in the history of art, was not exempt from the heartburnings and annoyances which so many men suffered in common with himself. At a very early age he entered with Ghirlandajo as a pupil; but instead of being taught, he began to teach. In truth, though he was but thirteen, his copies were better than the original. But the master smiled, and encouraged his bold apprentice. Not so the pupils: they were jealous of the juvenile artist. Benvenuto Cellini, himself a great man, often speaks of the blind hatred of his fellow-students. He could feel for him and sympathise with him. A quotation from the wondrous memoir of the Florentine silversmith will be well worthy of a place here.

"About this time (it was in 1518, thirty years after the event—Cellini was only eighteen), there came to Florence a sculptor named Peter Torregiani:—he came from England, where he had stayed several years. This man, seeing my designs and my labours, said to me: 'I have come to Florence

\* See page 52.